

Downtown

Everybody's Neighborhood

An Update from Columbus Mayor Michael B. Coleman



Downtown Plan Nearing Completion

March Unveiling Slated

The downtown business plan is nearing completion and is scheduled to be unveiled in mid-March. Task Force Chair Alex Shumate said, "The plan's framework contains a vision for Downtown, an implementation plan, and financing strategies. It will be the beginning of the revitalization of our Downtown – everyone's neighborhood."

The plan will look at strategies to bolster City Center as well as other amenities for people who want to live Downtown. The business plan also will call for enhancing parks and green space. The recently announced Spring – Long Street Park is the beginning of showcasing our riverfront as an important downtown attraction.

Improving how we move people around downtown is also part of the plan. This includes increasing parking, converting one way streets to two-way and slowing down traffic so that it is easier for pedestrians. The business plan also will address how to increase the number of people living Downtown.



Riverfront development is high on citizens' list of great ideas for Downtown.

Downtown Housing Goal – 600 Additional Units in '02

Downtown's housing has stagnated at 2,200 units since 1980. Over the past 10 years, only 200 units have been added Downtown, compared to more than 91,000 in the rest of Franklin County.

Several new projects are underway, or about to begin, including new construction projects and converting and adapting office space to lofts and apartments. These will be rented at market rates to help meet the untapped demand for Downtown living.

These projects are the first step in meeting Mayor Coleman's goal of adding 3,000 – 4,000 apartments, condos and houses Downtown over the next five years. Meeting this goal would translate into an additional 4,500-6,000 people living downtown, with most units averaging one to two people.



Additional Downtown housing could find a home in converted office buildings, like this one on Gay Street.

Pre-Development Advisory Team Smooths the Way

To help make it easier to develop housing Downtown, Mayor Coleman instituted the creation of a multi-department Pre-Development Advisory Team. Led by the City's Downtown Development Office, representatives from the Departments of Recreation and Parks, Safety, Public Service and Utilities help move projects through the permitting process. This new team will make Downtown more competitive and attractive for bringing private sector developers and investors to the core.

The Pre-Development Advisory Team provides a single point of contact for each project so the developer can call one person, who is familiar with the project, about permitting and inspection issues. The team works with both residential and commercial projects. In fact, its first project was commercial, the new Grant Medical building on East State Street. The next one will be Schottenstein, Zox and Dunn's new law offices in the Arena District.

To contact the Downtown Pre-Development Team, call Ken Ferrell at 614-645-4704.



Citizens also suggested more greenspace, like at the Topiary Park, for Downtown.

Downtown Living Across the Country: A Great Idea That's Catching On

Many cities across the nation are experiencing a renaissance in their downtown housing, even cities that have been losing population over the past decades such as Detroit, Chicago and Philadelphia.

A recent study by the Brookings Institution and the Fannie Mae Foundation surveyed 24 cities around the country and found

all expected their downtown residential populations to increase in the coming decade. Denver, Memphis and Cleveland stand out as success stories in their efforts to increase downtown housing over the past 10 years.

Denver

Denver's downtown housing success is concentrated in a district called LoDo, Lower Downtown, where warehouses and unused office space now stand as reborn lofts and apartments. Developers also built new condos and townhouses in the same area. This translated into 81 projects creating or converting 6,005 housing units.

Memphis

A residential construction boom in downtown Memphis that began in the late 1990's is continuing and has spurred this area's revival. In a June 1999 survey, residential units in downtown Memphis numbered just over 4,000 with 6,933 residents; over the next year and a half 1,600 units were completed; and an additional 1,360 will open in June of this year. This brings the total to almost 7,000.

Cleveland

Just up Interstate 71, downtown Cleveland also has seen a rebirth of its downtown and a substantial increase in its downtown housing. From 1994-1999 the city of Cleveland participated in 13 market rate development projects adding 1,175 new housing units.



Bike paths, an ice rink, and more downtown housing are a few of the great ideas suggested for Downtown.



You Told Us Your Great Ideas for Downtown

With the help of stories in local newspapers and public service announcements on our electronic media outlets, including all five local television stations and our cable systems, residents had the opportunity to "Tell Us Your Great Idea" for downtown. Citizens submitted their ideas via the Great Idea hotline, fax, email and regular mail.

In all, we received nearly 1,000 suggestions from residents about how we can improve Downtown. We'll be incorporating these ideas into the Downtown Business Plan that will be unveiled later this quarter.

"We asked citizens what they wanted to see Downtown, and they responded with nearly 1,000 great ideas," Mayor Coleman said. "Clearly people from all parts of the region believe that Downtown is everybody's neighborhood and feel they have a stake in its successful future. I want to personally thank everyone who took the time to write or call. With your great ideas, we'll make our plan for Downtown even stronger."



c/o Downtown
Development Office
109 N. Front Street
Columbus, OH 43215
<http://downtownplan.columbus.gov>

Downtown



New Fact Sheet Highlights Downtown Assets and Issues

As we finalize the Downtown Business Plan, Mayor Coleman’s office developed a new reference document to educate community leaders about Downtown. It is a detailed fact sheet called Downtown Assets and Issues.

Readers can see, at a glance, Downtown strengths as well as some of the challenges it faces. It is loaded with data and statistics that clearly show why now is the time to invest our attention, time and resources in our Downtown. Highlights of it are below.



View and download the entire fact sheet on the Downtown plan’s web site, <http://downtownplan.columbus.gov>.



Families from across Central Ohio enjoy Downtown events like the Arts Festival.

Assets

- Downtown property values total \$3.6 billion and have grown 23% since 1995. While Downtown represents less than 1% of county land, it provides 13% of Franklin County’s commercial/industrial tax base and 18% of the jobs. (Source: Franklin County Auditor’s Office)
- Downtown boasts 37% of Franklin County’s supply of commercial office space, making it an important center of commerce for the Central Ohio region. (Source: CB Richard Ellis, Office Market Overview, Fall 2001)
- Downtown is our arts and entertainment center with one of the best infrastructures for the performing arts in America, anchored by three historic restored theaters – the Ohio, Palace and Southern – along with the Riffe Center and Vets Memorial and the newly built Nationwide Arena and PromoWest Pavilion.



The historic Ohio Theatre hosts performances by the Columbus Symphony and Ballet Met, among other arts organizations.

- In the last five years, Downtown has been a lure for new development attracting \$905.7 million in private investment. (Source: Capitol South Community Urban Redevelopment Corporation; City of Columbus Downtown Development Office)
- The number of visitors to Downtown arts and cultural events has more than doubled, rising from 2,080,847 in 1990 to 5,133,630 visitors a year in 2000. (Source: CAPA; Greater Columbus Art Council; individual festival events reported attendance 2000)



Some of Downtown’s most significant assets are its cultural attractions and institutions, like COSI.

Issues

- Downtown office vacancy rates are at 21% – an 11-year high. This is nearly three times the rate of just five years ago. Only 65% of the storefronts along downtown High Street are currently in use as retail establishments; 17.2% are vacant and another 17% have been converted into offices. (Source: CB Richard Ellis, Office Market Overview, Fall, 2001, Capitol South Community Urban Redevelopment Corporation)

- Office costs in downtown Columbus are 30% higher on average than in an upscale suburban development. Downtown leasing/operations/parking = \$32.02/per square foot per year vs. suburban costs of \$24.56/per square foot per year. (Downtown costs: Rent \$18.52SF, Tax/Utilities/Operations \$8.00SF, Parking \$5.50. Suburban costs: Rent \$18.06SF, Tax/Utilities/Operations \$6.50, Parking Free; Source: HR&A)
- Downtown Columbus is geographically huge. At 1,300 acres (684 quarter blocks), both downtown Boston and the Chicago Loop could fit within our defined boundaries. Downtown Indianapolis is one-third our size. (Source: HR&A)
- City Center and other downtown retailers are facing stiff competition from newer developments. In 1990, Central Ohio offered 18.2 square feet of retail per person. Today, that number is 23.9 square feet per person. The national average is 20.7 square feet per person. Over four million square feet of new retail malls have been built in Greater Columbus in the last decade, giving Columbus the 4th highest retail to per capita ratio in the nation. (Source: Boulevard Strategies, Chris Boring, 2001; City of Columbus Downtown Development Office)



Stores at City Center compete with new retailers to the market and more shopping options.